Introduction of H.E. Kairat Umarov
Acting Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Remarks

by

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It is a great privilege for me to have this opportunity to introduce His Excellency Mr. Kairat Umarov as our next distinguished speaker.

I used the word “privilege” not just because Mr. Umarov is Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a prominent Central Asian nation whose initiatives have gained attention and respect throughout the world.

It is a particular privilege for me to make this introduction because of Kazakhstan’s many contributions to international peace and security, especially in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Its actions in closing down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991 and eliminating all nuclear weapons on its territory stand as concrete evidence that enlightened leadership can indeed lure the nuclear-weapon genie back into its bottle.

Kazakhstan reinforced these decisions by joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State and has successfully championed the establishment of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. It has contributed significantly to wider international efforts to enhance the safety of fissionable nuclear materials, while also promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

I find it especially fitting that Mr. Umarov is joining us at this year’s “World Leadership Forum” because of Kazakhstan’s determined efforts to translate multilateral norms into domestic laws, regulations, and policies. This is exactly what is most needed right now in the world community in the field of disarmament—a field all too often honoured more with lofty words than with practical deeds.

Through all of these actions, Kazakhstan has succeeded in raising disarmament to a high policy priority. Even more, one might say that disarmament has become part of Kazakhstan’s proud national identity. Its record of achievement in this field illustrates how progress in disarmament advances both ideals and self-interests. It has demonstrated how nuclear weapons hinder economic development through wasting valuable resources, not to mention the investments needed to cope with the tragic human and environmental consequences from the development of such weapons. In short, it has shown how a country can become a great nation without nuclear weapons.

I am especially pleased that Kazakhstan has joined the over 140 Member States that have indicated their support for negotiating a nuclear weapons
convention, a key part of the Secretary-General’s five-point nuclear disarmament proposal launched in 2008.

Our distinguished speaker today has long had a personal interest in the tragic humanitarian and environmental effects of over 450 Soviet-era nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. He was active in the “Nevada-Semipalatinsk” International Anti-Nuclear Movement, which contributed significantly to efforts to halt such tests permanently.

It has been said that this Movement practiced a diplomatic strategy on three levels—people, parliaments, and experts. Backed by international cooperation among concerned States, this may well offer a model not just for closing down other nuclear test sites around the world, but for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

In addition to his background in opposing nuclear testing, Mr. Umarov also has many years of diplomatic service, most recently as his country’s Ambassador to India. He is also a scholar, having received his Ph.D. in history.

So it is a special honour today for me as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to welcome Mr. Umarov back to New York and the United Nations. I wish now to invite him to the podium.